

The Semester I Led a Double (Reading) Life:  
My Experiences with Creating and Teaching an Honors College Colloquium

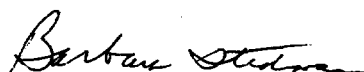
An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

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April 2001

Expected Date of Graduation

May 2001

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Abstract:

This thesis project was designed to satisfy a dual purpose: to allow me space and time to further my research on Waste Land and Fisher King imagery in literature from 1925 to 1945, and to give me the invaluable and unique experience of designing and teaching a college course. While the actual thesis experience, teaching the course, occurred in the Fall 2000 semester, I have included a written component here in order to record, reflect upon, and compile the materials specific to the course. This collection begins with a retrospective narrative that contains my reflections and self-critique on teaching the course. Following the narrative are five appendices: the first includes my syllabus and handouts created during the semester; the second contains samples of student work as it progressed through the semester; the third is comprised of a mid-term evaluation form that I created, as well as the students' anonymously recorded responses; the fourth includes my final evaluations from the official university forms; and the fifth is made up of an essay and two summaries of essays written during my fellowship on novels that were then covered in the course. The purpose of including six categories of information is to offer a composite, inclusive look at the teaching experience in my voice and my students' voices. This collection is also intended to provide a possible model for materials needed for teaching an Honors colloquium.

Acknowledgements:

Thank you so much to Barb Stedman, who enthusiastically supported my research ideas, my reading, and my teaching for far more than one semester; I would not have enjoyed this experience nearly as much without your humor and wisdom. Sincerest thanks to Joanne Edmonds, who fearlessly suggested I teach this course as my thesis project. And thank you, thank you, to Ted Fehskens: during your busy semester, you conscientiously asked me every Wednesday, without fail, how my class went and listened patiently to the sometimes dramatic and often over-long answers.

**Allow me to set the stage:**

As a result of a semester-long fellowship in Spring 1999 on Fisher King and Waste Land imagery in British and American literature written from 1925 to 1945, which I completed under the direction of Dr. Barbara Stedman, I was given the opportunity by the Honors College to turn my research and ideas into an Honors Colloquium of my design that I would then teach in the Fall 2000 semester. Naturally, Dr. Stedman became my mentor for my Honors senior project. In this project, I set a reading list, selected the texts that would be ordered, wrote the class description for the Honors College registration information, wrote the syllabus and all handouts, including a mid-term evaluation form<sup>1</sup>, prepared class discussion questions and lecture materials (which demanded I research literary movements, film studies and historical contexts), created the criteria for weekly commentaries, in-class presentations, and a final paper, and graded all assignments. Dr. Stedman attended most of the classes to observe me; we also met often to discuss the progress of the class and my pedagogical techniques. We met at the end of the semester to specifically discuss the grades I gave the students on their final projects so that we would be in agreement about those evaluations.

As an undergraduate with a keen interest in teaching at the college level, creating a class and teaching it have provided me with invaluable, practical experience in higher education. In addition to that experience, I also wanted to delve further into the Waste Land and Fisher King images that I examined in my fellowship. I felt that these symbols and the particular pattern in which they interact deserved attention beyond what I was capable of doing in a semester. I believed that I needed to know more about the historical context surrounding the authors I would assign, and I was also interested in finding out how the Fisher King and Waste Land images were used across genres. For example, I wanted to know how applicable the images were to film and music, beyond the time period I set for the literature. By preparing films for the course, bringing in musical examples applicable to discussion topics for that day, and preparing lecture material, I

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<sup>1</sup>Copies of this form and student replies appear in appendix 3.

was able to extend my learning and thinking about the Fisher King and Waste Land pattern beyond the bounds of the fellowship. Teaching this course has given me much upon which to reflect. A retrospective narrative follows as a collection of my thought processes before, during and after the teaching of the course.

**To begin at the beginning:**

I began the work for teaching this class with a semester-long fellowship, during which I read Jessie Weston's *From Ritual to Romance*; Alfred, Lord Tennyson's, *Idylls of the King*; T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*; and parts of Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur* in order to familiarize myself with Weston's understanding of and scholarship on Arthurian legends, Eliot's use of Weston's work, and other well-known and respected versions of the Arthurian legends. Reading the variety of expressions of the Arthurian legends led me to frustration: Which one is most accurate? Is there one? Why are the versions different? Do the differences have most to do with historical context, authorial intent, or sources considered by the author? My frustration motivated me to direct these questions onto a broader field. I decided to examine the ways that authors who were not necessarily writing versions of the Arthurian legend (like Tennyson) or explicitly alluding to Arthurian symbols (like Eliot) included the pattern and symbols in their work.

Again, focus became an issue. How did I determine which patterns in Arthurian legends to examine? Candidly, I chose the ones that resonated with my perspective of the world, observed and experienced both within and beyond literature. For those reasons, I found the quest to restore the health of an aging or dying king, which in turn restores a ruined land to health and verdure, was most interesting to me. Seasonal change fascinates me, and the human connection to the environment's well-being is something we forget. For instance, during the revisions of this narrative, I sit in my very insulated room, typing away on my laptop, listening to a compact disc, and completely unaware, until I recall it in my mind, of early green leaves newly sprouting on the trees, the broken blooms of tulips that are giving way to warmer-weather flowers, and the root systems, recently awoken, who are thirstily absorbing water and nutrients from the soil that has

once again grown soft and sponge-like. Unless I try to remember or go outside or purposefully look out the window, I am unaware of the activity occurring in the natural environment that surrounds me. This environment can be too easily ignored, which is a luxury or a bane that makes a physical connection between humans and nature very attractive to study. I posit that this physical connection still ties us strongly to the land, but we are able to insulate ourselves against it if we so choose. However, remembering this connection and then exploring the ties that exist between other humans forces us to recognize our places within the world and society instead of thinking of our lives as discrete and unrelated entities, untouched by the world unless we choose to make connections. I believe the connections should be recognized, participated in knowingly, and studied. For those reasons, this fellowship's work metamorphosed into both a personal and an academic quest for understanding how the natural environment exerts influence on humans and vice versa, and how we exert influence on each other.

The time period I chose to focus on in my fellowship was 1925 to 1945, the years between the World Wars and during WWII. Human perception of the natural world and the urban landscapes changed drastically between the wars, especially after WWII, and this change and focus on the environment and landscape led to representations of the world worth comparing with each other. Additionally, Eliot's and Weston's Arthurian allusions and scholarship were not floating alone in the sea of Modernist writings; the early years of the twentieth century experienced a rebirth in interest surrounding the Arthurian legend due to new translations of Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* and others. Furthermore, Modernist writing focuses on the alienation of the individual, the loss of connection between people and their environments, as evidenced by the oftentimes fragmented style of writing that comes from this literary time period. Thus, studying images that rely on human connection, both to other humans and to the physical land provides us with potentially new readings of Modernist fiction.

Unfortunately, this time frame was probably not quite limited enough because it opened up more reading possibilities than I could manage in a semester, and more novels than a two-credit-hour colloq should allow in a semester. For my fellowship I read F. Scott Fitzgerald's

*The Great Gatsby*, Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*, Graham Greene's *The Power and the Glory*, John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, and Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited*. For the colloq I assigned *Gatsby*, *To the Lighthouse*, *The Sun Also Rises*, *The Power and the Glory*, and *Brideshead Revisited*. In spite of a substantial pool of literature from which I could choose texts to study, I feel I was not diverse enough in my choices of authors. For instance, I limited myself to American and English authors, including white men and one woman, but no post-colonial or African-American writers. I think this denotes an obvious lack of diversity in my reading list, but it is also possible that the pattern and images I chose to focus on appeared most predominantly in the writings of white, American and English authors. Although I attempted to compare a variety of ways that the Wasteland/Fisher King pattern could be used in literature from 1925 to 1945, my success in finding different uses of the pattern did not include as diverse a representation of the writing world as I would have liked. But also, upon reflection, I realize that such diversity may not have been possible in this particular course.

Despite the limitations and problems with the reading list that we (Dr. Stedman and I) decided upon, I found the five novelists made use of similar patterns in different and even contradictory manners. During the fellowship, I did my reading and research as a student and scholar.<sup>2</sup> Reading and writing as a student proved that this pattern was prevalent in the literature I was reading in the time period, and that undergraduates could analyze its use and function in novels. In fact, the pattern is so prevalent and recognizable that students began to come into class with Waste Land or Fisher King examples in movies they saw over the weekend, photographs in magazines, music they were listening to; they were making the course interdisciplinary and extending their course knowledge beyond the classroom with little provocation from me (an instance of the ideal becoming real). Initially reading the novels as a student actually helped my teaching style. Going into each class session, I was aware of most of the problems and some of the excitement that would arise in discussion because I had already gone through the reading

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<sup>2</sup>For examples of the writing I did on my readings, see appendix 5.

process as a student, trying to find this Waste Land/Fisher King pattern for the first time, deciding what its purpose was in a particular novel, and wrestling with and finding significance in any alterations to the pattern that occurred in a particular novel.

During the semester I taught the class as a teacher, I tried to remain cognizant of the student-centered reading perspective while re-reading the novels as a teacher. I learned in this process that one must read quite differently as a teacher. I found myself reading much more closely, especially looking for difficult and/or important passages, focusing on characterization and how it changes throughout a novel, deciding upon the images I felt were most important to discuss, and the most drastic shift in my reading style--learning how to ask questions that would get my students to find the answers for themselves. What I found incredibly useful to me in this reading-as-a-teacher process was keeping in mind the reading-as-a-student process. In a way, I was leading a double reading life, being both student and teacher in my mind while I read. This duality helped me focus and word my questions during discussion so that the students would be able to answer in ways that not only facilitated additional discussion, but also helped the students appreciate and validate their readings and discover different readings.

Although preparing discussions about the novels was a central activity in teaching this course, my own desire for a more historically informed understanding of the time period in which we were reading led me to preparing additional materials for class. The work I did for the fellowship in this area was not quite sufficient to begin teaching a course on this topic. I felt I needed information on Modernism as a literary movement, the time period in general, and its effect on various writers we would read in particular. Although I did not use a great deal of this additional reading and research in the course, I felt better prepared to field and ask questions that would relate directly to the time periods in the various novels. For instance, I brought in pictures of Oxford, England, and England after WWII before we began discussing *Brideshead Revisited* in order to visually familiarize the class with the England about which Evelyn Waugh (through his narrator, Charles Ryder) was writing. Although I read about more than we discussed in class, I



felt that the visual examples at least helped to show students how profoundly idyllic and then destroyed the England of *Brideshead Revisited* really was.

The prevalence of Fisher King and Waste Land imagery corresponds to the each novel's historical context. The World Wars indelibly impacted human consciousness and perspectives on the world, and the images we traced throughout the class gave those authors a pattern and arena in which to address questions such as "What is the human connection to the landscape and environment?" and "What is the human connection to other humans?" In light of the massive destruction witnessed, experienced, and remembered, a narrative pattern that focuses on regeneration and connection provides a provocative space for writers who are dealing with issues of disconnection and destruction.

Armed with my readings of the novels, some criticism that pertained to those readings, and historical context, I felt that I could be ready to share my knowledge and thoughts with a classroom of students. I did approach class as a discussion-oriented place in which each of us was responsible for expressing our ideas about the literature we had read for that week. Creating this sort of environment helped put students at ease to make comments or report on observations about which they were not completely sure. I greatly appreciated the degree to which we could pontificate in the classroom because it showed that most of the students were comfortable with expressing their opinions to one another and to me. However, maintaining discussion was not my only responsibility. Writing the syllabus and other handouts proved to be a different experience altogether.

**A syllabus is considered legally binding, and other important thoughts to keep in mind while writing handouts:**

Little did I know how important the difference between "I expect" and "I would like" seem when attempting to convey expectations without sounding like a tyrant. For example, when detailing my expectations of their weekly writings on their reading or viewing assignment, which I

called commentaries<sup>3</sup>, I wrote that “I expect [students] to use the commentary as a place to explore ideas[ . . .].” In this instance, “expect” was necessary because “would like” would have allowed students to think that my expectations of their writing and thinking were merely suggestions to which they could subscribe or not. In order to guarantee analytical, questioning writing, I felt that using the stronger word, “expect,” was necessary.

Because the students who signed up for my class knew that I was a student myself, I wanted to make clear that this was a real class, with a real syllabus, grades, expectations, and workload. For that reason, I asked Dr. Stedman and other professors how much reading and writing they usually assigned, as well as how they weighted the grades of work done throughout the semester.

The reading schedule I originally laid out for the syllabus was too rigorous, and thankfully, Dr. Stedman helped me remedy this. The reading schedule I gave the students was still not balanced very well at times, but it was more important to me to break reading assignments where the novel naturally broke instead of dividing up into exactly equal halves the novels that we would take two weeks to read. I also should have revised my distribution of the students’ overall grades in the class. Looking back on the semester, I think that I should not have allocated 40% of the students’ grades to their final projects, regardless of how much time I encouraged them to spend on the projects and regardless of how early in the semester I reminded them and met with them to begin work on the projects. Having just returned from a term in England where I did not have any idea of my final grade until after the term was over, and having had that entire grade determined by four papers and nothing else, I didn’t think that 40% for one large project was unrealistic. I think the students would have maintained a better understanding of the material we were reading and discussing if I had assigned a shorter paper/project at mid-semester and then another one, with creative emphasis/encouragement, later in the semester.

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<sup>3</sup>I have provided commentaries, with student permission, in appendix 2; the syllabus and other handouts appear in appendix 1. I collected three commentaries each from four students whose writing and reading improved over the course of the semester. These examples also conform to the guidelines I provided in my syllabus.

Being (painfully) clear in my expectations, especially with the commentaries, made for focused and high quality work (most of the time--everyone was understandably "tired" for at least one commentary, and it showed). I enjoyed reading the commentaries because almost all of the students followed the guidelines I set out for them in the syllabus. I think that being so precise in my expectations rendered me strict and harsh, but explaining the reasons for such preciseness on the first day of class seemed to prevent everyone from walking out on me.<sup>4</sup>

I also found it helpful to include a clear explanation of my attendance policy, a policy I found difficult to create and maintain. There are always going to be special situations and crises, and I dealt with those as they arose, but what seemed most unfair to me in my attendance policy was that I accepted only one unexcused absence, and I threatened to lower grades for repeated excused absences as well. This policy was difficult to maintain because I found it impossible to punish students when I felt so fortunate for their overall efforts in the class and patience with me in particular. Furthermore, one student's appendix was taken out during the semester and another student tore his achilles tendon. I never thought one classroom could have so many serious medical problems. For those students, I disregarded the attendance policy because the problems they were having were unavoidable, and they did not need the added stress of not doing well in a class because they physically could not attend.

The only bit of wording I would add to the attendance policy would be about tardiness. I had no idea that this was still a problem. Since almost everyone was a junior or senior, I thought they would know it was respectful to arrive on time. I admit that I always arrived about a minute late, but I explained that I came from a previous meeting that always ran late. The students who arrived consistently late, and there were only a few of them, never provided a reason. Because we tended to deal with business issues at the start of every class, these people would miss any changes, additions, or announcements. In order to prevent this in the future, I will add a line about

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<sup>4</sup>Appendix 1 includes a complete reproduction of my syllabus, as well as reproductions of any other handouts I used in class. Perusing these will provide the reader with a more complete perspective of the course.

how I expect punctuality, unless the student has a reason for coming late. Alternatively, I could simply say something in the beginning of the semester about arriving on time.

I never understood why a professor would go through a syllabus after handing it out on the first day of class, but I think I now have an appreciation for this practice. Going through a syllabus provides another voice, though still the instructor's voice, that states and explains the expectations and work load of the class. I think going through the syllabus with my students helped show them that I was quite serious about the policies and expectations that I laid out in the syllabus, but that I was also human and not bent on running a tyrannical classroom and so could be approached at any time with questions or concerns, could be joked with, and could be challenged, all of which my students (much to my delight) did, over the course of the semester.

Other than the first reading assignment, which was a collection of handouts, I rarely passed out material in class. The class was firmly driven by discussion, which was supported and propelled by an occasional lecture from me or a group presentation on an author. The students took notes as they saw fit, a practice which slackened considerably as the semester progressed. I think this was due to the fact that we did not have an exam of any sort based specifically on the readings done for class. If I were to do this course over again, I would have an exam of some type at the end of the semester that would require students to continue taking notes throughout the semester. I think discussion goes more smoothly and continuously if students are engaged in each other's ideas, both by commenting on them verbally and writing them down.

As for the other handouts I made, I think the most important ones were the mid-term evaluations that students responded to, anonymously, via email to Dr. Stedman, and the writing guidelines that I passed out before their final projects were due. I also created a handout of significant Modernist quotations, but that was for students' additional understanding and enjoyment; it was not vital information. I deliberated over the necessity for a handout about MLA documentation and another about some writing basics. I thought that surely everyone would have a firm grasp of how to write a thesis, how to write a research paper, and how to construct a works cited page. However, after talking to Dr. Stedman about my expectations and discussing

them with another student who was also teaching a colloq for her thesis, I learned that even if students have written research papers before, they need a reminder about writing techniques and styles. I put together a brief collection of writing reminders and realized as I passed it out--apologizing for any possible and potential woundings of pride that such a handout could inflict--that I had received similar reminders, written or oral, from my English department professors every semester. Based on the lack of wounded looks and comments, as well as my personal realization, I determined that a little reminder on how to write a research paper can only help.

I think at least one more handout could have helped the students with their grasp of Fisher King and Waste Land imagery. Looking back through their mid-term evaluations of the course and of me, I realize that some of them were still struggling to understand the basic characteristics of the Waste Land, as well as its connection to the Fisher King. I could have alleviated these struggles by creating a handout with lists of characteristics, as well as potential patterns in which we could find the Fisher King/Waste Land relationship. I expected the students to have taken careful notes as we covered that material in the first few weeks; in retrospect, I realize that a handout would have greatly supplemented these notes.

#### **The Much Anticipated First Day:**

After much preparation that, I felt, was never actually completed, I walked into a classroom in which I did not sit down at a desk in the third row, half-way between the center and the door (my preferred spot in any classroom). Instead, I stopped at the front of the room, said "Good Morning," and began by introducing myself and the class, in case anyone was in the wrong place. I recognized several people in the room, either from other classes, as acquaintances, or because I lived with them in the residence halls a few years before. Knowing those people made me realize, crucially, that I would be teaching my peers for a semester. Because I did not know anyone in the class very well, I think I was saved from possibly uncomfortable situations of correcting or evaluating people who would be, in all other situations, not in a student-instructor situation with me.

Other than the fact that I carried the roll sheet with me and was the only person in the room who had the vaguest idea of what was going to happen that day, I did not feel like a figure of authority. In order to establish myself as both a student and an instructor, I told them very briefly about how I went from a passing interest in the footnotes for T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* to standing before them, telling them to get the editions of the books listed in the syllabus because those had the introductions or prefaces I preferred they read. I also told them quite seriously that I had no idea what sort of conclusions we would arrive at because I had not arrived at any definite conclusions about why the Waste Land and Fisher King themes are prevalent from 1925 to 1945. I think that by setting up my position in the classroom as both a student (I was instructing the class not only for them, but as my senior thesis) and an instructor (I came armed with a stereo for a musical example, stacks of reading, and the syllabus) I put myself in a position of authority, remaining free from a good portion of the obsequious fakery that can occur in Honors classes. Because Honors students are quite grade-conscious, they seem to want to write and speak to the professor's wishes and opinions and occasionally turn in made-up work instead of honestly admitting that they had not done the reading. My students happily disagreed with me, questioned me, and told me when they did not do the reading. I appreciated this honesty, and I wonder if I received it so openly because I existed as an instructor in a gray area between student and professor, or if I was simply lucky enough to have an unusually honest bunch of Honors students.

After establishing the boundaries and set up of the classroom, I wanted to pass out the syllabus and reading, but did not want the students to leave after that business was taken care of. In an effort to illustrate to the students what sort of thinking and work we were going to do that semester, I brought in some music, a piece of literature, and a film clip to illustrate depictions of the Waste Land without explicitly using the term, "Waste Land." I started the trio of examples with a song by The Stranglers called "No More Heroes." Although The Stranglers follows F. Scott Fitzgerald, et. al. by a few decades, I thought this British/French Punk song accurately described the desolation that the writers on the syllabus express in their novels. For my textual sample, I included a passage from Fitzgerald's essay, "The Crack Up," and I finished the trio of

examples with the opening scene of Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now*. After presenting each example and asking basic comprehension questions, I asked the students to find similarities across the three works. After they compiled a brief list that satisfied me, I told them that we would continue to make such connections across novels and genres throughout the class.

With this trio of examples I wanted to illustrate the many possible spaces, across genres and decades, where Fisher King and Waste Land imagery appear and can be compared. I was worried from the first day of class that such narrowly focused reading would impair our abilities to make connections to other literature, music, film, and the world. Using the first day for cross-genre exposure to and comparison of Waste Land and Fisher King imagery avoided a narrow approach to the course material and subject matter. Additionally, it was important to me to establish an actual, working-classroom rapport with the students before wading through the first week's ponderous readings; I gave them selections from Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*, and Weston's *From Ritual to Romance*, and all of T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*--not an easy first week's reading list; I'm still thankful that only one student dropped. From the brief presentation, asking of questions, and discussion, I was able to gauge how I could get the best discussion from the class through different kinds of questioning.

### **The Trouble with Class Discussion:**

As much as I wanted to come in every week to a class that was eager and ready to talk about the novel or part of the novel or film that they read or watched for that week, I was greeted more often with the same sort of bland look that I probably have given most of my instructors. Despite the (nearly constant, in some cases) looks of exhaustion and disinterest that ranged across the room, we were able to have animated discussions through a series of general and specific questions. The general questions would begin with "How did you get along with this work?" or "What did you think of the reading?" Both questions occasionally provided enough of a response to direct discussion to a problem area in a text. This type of beginning provided the students with a better understanding of a passage or idea in the text that was not immediately clear. Starting in a specific area provided me with the opportunity to ask more specific questions about that area in

the text, or connect that problem area with another part of the text about which I could also ask specific questions. When the general questions did not provide ample feedback, I was content to continue with more specific questions. For example, I asked the class what sorts of Waste Lands were in the reading, who could be a Fisher King, and who could be a Questing Knight. Sometimes I would begin with a question specific to the novel. For instance, when we read *To the Lighthouse*, I asked the class to characterize Mrs. Ramsay and Mr. Ramsay and then to compare each character's interactions with the guests and their children. From those answers, we could smoothly transition to Waste Land and Fisher King images in the text. I also started off the class with more candid, though equally important, questions. For example, when we read *The Sun Also Rises*, I asked the students what they thought of all the drinking and carousing about Spain. From their animated answers, we made our way to discussing the particularly opulent and hollow Waste Land that Hemingway creates in his novel.

There were often different answers to these questions, and the variety of answers provided an opportunity to develop ideas that were otherwise casually tossed into the discussion. Using a combination of general and specific, serious and candid questions was an important and valuable way to govern discussion because students became more adept as the semester progressed at identifying the Waste Land, Fisher King, and Questing Knight and providing examples, reasoning, and support, instead of casually stating an idea.

Occasionally, though, I realized that only four to five people were actually participating in the discussion. In a class of fourteen in which participation was a part of the final grade, I thought that was a dismal statistic. As much as I rail against it in the classes that I take, I submitted to the group-work impulse several times with--much to my surprise--a great deal of success. On days when much of the class was trying desperately to go unnoticed, or when I thought we had more to discuss than we could possibly get through in two hours, I divided the class into four or five groups and gave each of them a topic to discuss. I would leave them to their groups for about fifteen to twenty minutes, or until I could tell that almost everyone was talking about something not even distantly related to class material. After that time, I would bring everyone back together



as a class to “report their findings.” This practice produced invaluable results. We covered a great deal more material and had time to discuss all of it. While reporting what one group talked about, members of other groups would sometimes comment on what was being said, which would, wonderfully, spark further discussion. I do not know how well group discussion works in other classrooms, but I think when there are copious amounts of material to cover in a short period of time, or when several people in a class are especially quiet, group work gives the quiet people a chance to express their ideas in a much less threatening way and also covers a great deal more material than would be possible with the whole class involved in a single discussion.

**I admit it, I love to lecture:**

Yes, I know that I keep writing about how I wanted to have a discussion-based classroom, and I am happy that I ultimately did, but I thought occasional lectures provided a more complete understanding of the coursework. I prepared one lecture on Modernism and another on how to critically watch a film. Preparing for the lectures put me at ease with the overall topic of discussion, and it gave all of us, myself and my students, a point of reference. For instance, while reading the novels, we occasionally referred to Modernist styles and perspectives, which grounded the works in time and literary history. While discussing the films, we referred to my lecture on film-watching in order to support why we were talking about particular film angles or lighting or music.

I would have been equally happy to lecture on each of the authors we were reading, but realized that it might be more beneficial to the class (and kinder to myself) if I assigned these author-lectures to groups of students. As a result, four groups of three, and one group of two, presented biographical information on an author on the first or only day we were discussing his/her novel. The student presentations went reasonably well, meaning that they presented their findings clearly and did not provide false information, but not all of the groups connected the author’s life to the themes and topics of the class, an oversight which was partially my fault. I asked the students to do this, but only once, and only at the beginning of the semester. Had I reminded them before each presentation, perhaps more connections between the author’s life from

1925-1945 and Waste Land and Fisher King imagery would have become more relevant to the presentations.

**I loved the book that the whole class (seriously) disliked, or, the importance of being honest:**

The week before we read Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, I told the students that it was a hard book to read; that it was easy to get lost in the sentences that seemed to reel (deliciously, in my opinion) across pages, only loosely bound together by semicolons; that it was one of my favorite books; and that I thought the prose was, in many places, "drop dead gorgeous." Yes, I used almost all of those words. And the next week, when I came into a room of students who had just encountered the first section of *To the Lighthouse*, I realized that most of them did not share my enthusiasm for the novel. As the class progressed, I realized that all of them did not share in my enthusiasm, and they had bonded as a class over their collective dislike of Woolf's style. So be it. I knew they wouldn't like everything I liked, but for the whole class not to like the novel was a little hard to swallow. However, they honestly told me they didn't like it; I honestly told them that I loved it; and I realized that we could use those emotional reactions as a launch pad for discussion of Waste Land and Fisher King imagery. Although class discussion went slowly, it was much better the next week, when they finished the novel, and when I gave them group work to do.

What was important for me to learn by teaching this novel was not that a great deal of stream of consciousness writing is not reader-friendly to non-English majors (I already suspected that), but that telling your students whether or not you like a book is essential to maintaining honesty in a classroom. As much as I wanted to focus on representations, patterns, and themes in the novels and films that we discussed, I know that everyone has an emotional reaction to a novel or film. Sharing enthusiasm or dislike shows that this emotional reaction is valid and should be expressed, but that discussion should also move beyond this level. However, an occasional return to the emotionally guided assessment of characters, scenes, or situations can be valuable for comic relief, at the very least.

### The Mid-Life Crisis of a Semester-Long Course:

Near the middle of the semester I began to worry that our topics of discussion were becoming repetitive, that continually talking about the Waste Land and Fisher King imagery in novels and films was putting us, as a class, into a rut. I worried that the students were relaxing into identifying these images and then leaving them alone, not putting them in dialogue with the other images that we had previously encountered in reading and viewing. At this point in the semester, I tried to open up discussion by talking about the same themes through discussions of characterization or setting. Instead of *connecting* those moments of character, plot, or setting analysis with the course topic, the students had become satisfied with just *talking about* character, plot, or setting. I was concerned that our discussions had little or no connection to previous class meetings and that we were not achieving an overall understanding of Waste Land and Fisher King functions. I attempted to ameliorate this problem by refocusing the discussion and then leading the students back to the images with which, by now, they were quite familiar.

I think taking half of a class period, both in the middle and at the end of the semester, to review what we had read, discussed, brought up, disagreed with, and agreed upon would have given students a detailed overview of the different ways that literature and film manipulated these images. Such an exercise, while using up extra time that we did not have, would have successfully provided my students with an overreaching yet concise understanding of how Waste Land and Fisher King imagery functions in literature from 1925 to 1945. How I attempted to draw connections across these works was not successful with the students because only one of them was an English major, and I was attempting to use pedagogy and reading techniques practiced in my English classes. My students were content with talking about the plot, the possible motivations and meanings of various actions, and occasionally, dialogue in the novels and films, but they were not willing to take their reading beyond those levels. I do not think, however, that only someone with training in English studies can do the kind of close reading that I wanted to do, as a class. I believe, and I feel that this belief is supported by their carefully thought-out and composed final projects, that my students could have closely read texts and compared them to

each other if they had been encouraged and expected to discuss a text in that manner at the beginning of the course.

If we had spent half a class period talking through the various uses of the course's images, we could have created a diagram at the very least, illustrating the diverging and converging uses of the imagery. At that point, we could have reflected on why those mapped similarities and differences existed and, finally, to what end those similarities and differences appeared in the novels and functioned at the time they were written and how they affect us, currently, as readers.

As the semester progressed, all of us, including me, began to forget that the Fisher King's and Waste Land's health are correlative and that this relationship is what miraculously controls the fate of the symbolic kingdom. Equally important is the role of the Questing Knight who must save the Fisher King and, by association, restore the land to a healthy state. Again, my students were content to identify a character who was questing for something, whether it be concrete or abstract. However, I was so happy with their often creative observations that I neglected to push those observations, to require the students to connect the images, if possible, and show how they related to each other. This lack of "pushing" on my part prevented us from reaching many conclusions in our discussions.

**Feeling a bit sheepish, or, how my class outdid me in creative applications of these images in their final projects:**

I held individual conferences with my students in October to discuss their plans for their final projects. I wanted to make sure that serious thinking had gone into that portion of the class, as it counted for such a large portion of their grades. Most of the students came to the conference with at least one, and oftentimes more than one, idea of what they could do. Only a few students seemed unprepared and unconcerned by their lack of preparedness. After discussing the implications of each project, what it would involve, and what sorts of materials would be turned in and presented to the class, I felt confident that several of the students would produce interesting and creative projects that examined the Fisher King and Waste Land images in films, groups of artists, or tarot cards, to name a few examples. Luckily, and I attribute this to the fact

that I had an overwhelming number of conscientious and considerate students who did not want to turn in vague or carelessly put-together work, many of the students succeeded in creating impressive projects that challenged them as students and me as a grader.

As I began to read through the projects (all of them contained a written component, though I altered the length requirement in a few cases due to the larger importance placed on the presentation), I realized that evaluating them would be difficult if I did not create a rubric by which I would grade the papers. If I failed to do this before reading too many of them, my grading scale would be relative to the class's work and not necessarily to the expectations that I laid out several times for the students. I did not think that it would be fair to judge each student's work against the work of his/her colleagues, so I stopped reading the essays and thought about what I would consider an *A* or *B* or *C* paper. An *A* paper would demonstrate, through the use of primary and secondary sources, the appearance and functions of the Fisher King and Waste Land imagery in whatever arena the student chose to focus. A paper of this caliber would contain strong and clear writing that explored the possible implications of recognizing these images--both for the meaning of the work and for the reader (or watcher, or listener). A *B* paper may or may not contain secondary sources (a distressing problem I found in a few papers, but since I did not explicitly say or write out that they must use secondary sources, I did not feel that I could count off considerably for the lack of them). More importantly, a *B* paper would overlook or not reach that final concluding question, "So what?" Not addressing this question considerably weakens a paper. If there is no argument for why these images appear in a movie or novel, then I see little reason to identify them. There were several *B* papers, according to these criteria, and I think that the grades and quality of these papers could have been higher if, throughout the class, we had asked ourselves, "So what if there are Fisher King and Waste Land images in this novel? How does that affect the novel, and how does that affect my reading of the novel?" These are questions with difficult answers that require a great deal of probing and consideration, something for which, in a course already pressed for time, we did not have room. I think, in future classes, I will make room; the students do not always leave class and ask themselves those questions independently.

**Food, film, final exam--a perfect trio:**

From the beginning of the course I knew I would not give a final exam. I know this means that students are hoping or expecting to skip the final meeting time entirely. However, I also knew that academic policy demands every class meet for a final exam, so I gave the class two options. In a discussion during the semester, we found out that a few students had not seen *The Neverending Story*, which was a film that encapsulated the quintessential Saturday morning of childhood for the rest of us. The film also happened to have a Fisher King (who was actually an empress), a Questing Knight, and a Waste Land. I suggested that we use the final exam time to watch the film, and since the exam was scheduled in the morning, I also suggested we bring food. I knew that at that point in the semester, students may not want to have a structured activity for their final exam; in order to accommodate that wish, I offered to simply be available during their final exam time so that they could come in and talk about the class, or they could stay away if they preferred. Surprisingly, the class voted to make pancakes and coffee in the Honors College kitchen and watch the movie. Some students even brought in extra food for those who didn't want pancakes.

I think this situation illustrates an overreaching result of (and as close as I am going to get to a conclusive statement about) this class. Though, coming into the course, the students knew very little about the Fisher King and Waste Land, they found countless examples of it in the films we watched, my occasional musical examples, and the novels we read. Their observations did not stop at the course materials. They often asked me if I had heard a song, seen a picture in the *Daily News* or seen a movie that had "great Waste Land imagery in it," or "a cool sort of Fisher King." Watching a movie that many of us associate with childhood and doing so in a relaxed setting that included preparing and eating food told me that the students were very comfortable with the course material by the end of the semester. I think I can even venture into saying that they were glad they knew about the Fisher King and Waste Land because it changed or enhanced materials they came into contact with beyond the materials they read and watched for this class.

As for myself, I have a difficult time not seeing Questing Knights, Fisher Kings and Waste Lands around me in a variety of forms. However, I don't think the inextricable bond between humans and their physical environment is an unworthy idea upon which to fixate. Even as I reach the end of this narrative, I have grown more attuned to my connection with the physical environment beyond Miles Davis's fusion jazz and the hum of my computer, and into the earth that continually regenerates, pushing forth "lilacs out of the dead land"--which happens around this time every year.

## Appendix 1: Handouts

### Waste Land and Fisher King Imagery Through the Twentieth Century Honors 390, section 10 Fall 2000

Erin McMullen  
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Phone: 741-8614

Mentor: Dr. Barb Stedman  
Email: bstedman@gw.bsu.edu  
Phone: 285-8395 (or, if  
urgent, 288-2890)

**Course Description:** The purpose of this course is to explore Fisher King and Waste Land symbols through twentieth century literature and film. We will begin with a short introduction to the Fisher King and Waste Land and how they appear in the King Arthur legend/folk tale. With this foundation, we will then consider how the symbols and legend are used in British and American literature from 1925 to 1945. Taking the course into the present day, we will explore examples of the Fisher King and Waste Land in film.

#### **Required Texts:**

Fitzgerald, F. Scott: *The Great Gatsby* (preface and notes by Brucoli)  
Greene, Graham: *The Power and the Glory* (introduction by Updike)  
Hemingway, Ernest: *The Sun Also Rises*  
Waugh, Evelyn: *Brideshead Revisited*  
Woolf, Virginia: *To the Lighthouse* (introduction by Welty)  
Assorted Handouts

#### **Grading:**

Commentaries: 25%  
Group Presentation: 20%  
Final Project: 40%  
Participation: 15%

#### **Policies:**

**Commentaries:** Each week you will be required to write a commentary based on the assignment for that week. These are not meant to be formal essays, but they are also not intended to be a space to simply vent about how much you liked/disliked the reading. I expect you to use the commentary as a place to explore ideas, react critically to the text or film, raise questions, argue with yourself, etc., and I expect the the majority of your writing to be on depictions of the Waste Land and uses of the Fisher King symbol in the assignment for that week. You don't need to reach any conclusions in these entries; just show me that you have completed the assignment and are thinking about it. Plot summary is not acceptable. Commentaries should be a minimum of 250 words, typed or not, and you are encouraged to go beyond that length. Because they are



designed to facilitate class discussion, I will accept late entries only in the case of an excused absence (see below). Commentaries are due in class each week.

**Group Presentations:** In order to have a better understanding of the authors we are reading, each of you will work in a group that will present biographical information on an author. Specifics about this assignment will be discussed later.

**Final Project:** This assignment will be discussed later.

**Participation:** I believe discussion is essential to this class. Therefore, I expect everyone to participate in the discussion each time class meets. If discussion seems to be lacking, it is possible that quizzes will be given and the grades included in the participation portion for the semester.

**Attendance Policy:** Because this class only meets once a week, attendance is crucial. Illness and emergencies are considered excused. However, you must contact me by phone and/or email *before* the class meets for that week. All other absences are considered unexcused; I will allow one unexcused absence and will then lower your final grade by 10% for each additional unexcused absence. Please note that several excused absences may also lower your grade.

**A Note of Explanation:** The designing and teaching of this course fulfills the requirements for my Senior Thesis. As Mentor, Dr. Stedman will attend most of the classes. We will collaboratively review all work and grades. If you have any problems, questions, or complaints about the course, the matter can be brought to either of us; we will deal with such situations collaboratively. As a student in the course, you can request that Dr. Stedman intervene in any situation, should the need arise. Her phone numbers and email address are on the first page of this syllabus.

**Special Needs:** If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, if you have emergency medical information to share with me, or if you need special arrangements in the case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible.

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### Course Schedule

\* I reserve the right to alter this schedule at any time.

#### Week One:

August 23      Course introduction

#### Week Two:

August 30      Assigned reading from Weston, Tennyson, Eliot

Week Three:

September 6 Myth and Modernism handouts; Guest Speaker

Week Four:

September 13 Fitzgerald

Week Five:

September 20 Woolf (sections one and two)

Week Six:

September 27 Woolf (final section)

Week Seven:

October 4 Hemingway

Week Eight:

October 11 Film

Week Nine:

October 18 Individual Conferences on Final Project

Week Ten:

October 25 Greene

Week Eleven:

November 1 Film

Week Twelve:

November 8 Waugh (Book 1)

Week Thirteen:

November 15 Waugh (Book 2 to the end)

Week Fourteen:

November 22 Film

Week Fifteen:

November 29 Course wrap-up; final project presentations

Week Sixteen:

December 6 Final project presentations

## Everything you always wanted to know about MLA documentation but were afraid to ask

### First things first:

- Works Cited should appear at the top of the page where you list all the sources you referenced in your paper. It should be in the center, the same size as everything else on the page.
- Your sources should be in alphabetical order, according to what piece of information occurs first in each citation.
- Do not number your citations.
- If the citation extends beyond one line, indent the second, third, etc. lines.
- Double-space the whole page. There should be no additional spaces between citations.

### Some useful examples:

#### Book by one author:

Welty, Eudora. *One Writer's Beginnings*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1984.

#### Book by two or more authors:

Leghorn, Lisa, and Katherine Parker. *Women's Worth*. Boston: Routledge, 1981.

#### Article from a daily newspaper:

Dullea, Georgia. "Literary Folk Look for Solid Comfort." *New York Times* 16 Apr. 1986: C14.

#### Article from a monthly or bimonthly magazine:

Roosevelt, Anna. "Lost Civilizations of the Lower Amazon." *Natural History* Feb. 1989: 74-83.

#### Article in a scholarly journal:

Hashimoto, Irvin. "Pain and suffering: Apostrophes and Academic Life." *Journal of Basic Writing* 7.2 (1988): 91-98.

#### Selections from an anthology or an edited book:

Galarza, Ernest. "The Roots of Migration." *Aztlan: An Anthology of Mexican American Literature*. Ed. Luis Valdez and Stan Steiner. New York: Knopf, 1972. 127-132.

#### A sound recording:

Dylan, Bob. *Time Out of Mind*. Columbia, 1997.

A film:

*It's a Wonderful Life*. Dir. Frank Capra. Perf. James Stewart, Donna Reed, Lionel Barrymore, and Thomas Mitchell. 1946. Videocassette. Republic, 1988.

How to refer to your references in your paper:

If you are quoting or paraphrasing material from one of the sources you are using for your paper, you need to make that clear in the paper. So, at the end of the sentence or group of sentences quoted or paraphrased, include a parenthetical reference just before your end punctuation mark. You can do this in two ways:

Waugh writes, "It was charm again, my dear, simple, creamy English charm, playing tigers" (273).

--or--

"It was charm again, my dear, simple, creamy English charm, playing tigers" (Waugh 273).

Either way you choose, you must include somewhere in the quoted or paraphrased material the author's last name and the page number where that information can be found.

## A Few Gentle Reminders About Writing. . .

### Disclaimer:

At the risk of sounding patronizing, I thought a few suggestions on what should be in your papers might help all of you. So, if this is patronizing and something you've heard six thousand times, forgive me. . .

### What is your topic? Where are you going with it?

By now, you have decided on a specific topic for this final project, and many of your topics involve writing a research/analysis paper. But the fun doesn't stop there; you must focus your topic, which in turn focuses your research and analysis. Your focused topic, your position on your topic needs to be stated in a thesis statement.

A thesis statement is essential. The thesis statement comes near the beginning of the paper and lets your audience know what your angle is. The bulk of your paper then consists of providing supporting evidence that proves your thesis. As one writing manual defines it, "The thesis sentence usually contains a key word or controlling idea that limits its focus" (Hacker 25). And as another writing manual advises, the thesis statement "narrows the topic to a single idea that you want readers to gain from your essay. It asserts something about the topic, conveying your purpose, your opinion, your attitude" (Fowler and Aaron 34). The thesis sentence guides your writing and your audience's reading of your paper. Always keep your thesis in mind as you are writing, and make sure that your supporting points do just that--support your thesis. Tangents are fun, but they hinder your paper if you do not relate them to your thesis, which doesn't really make them tangents anymore. . .

### "And in the end..." where are you?

Your conclusion should sum up your thesis and main points, but it should also direct your reader to some concluding idea that gives your paper and your thesis that extra zip and tang that everyone wants his/her paper to have. Some difficult but useful questions to ask yourself when writing your conclusion are So what? Why have you taken the time and made the effort to prove that you have proven? How do your position and your ideas enhance a viewing of a film, a reading of a book, a consideration of an historical time period? Are there any additional and further insights that you have that can contribute to your thesis and paper? and so on, and so on. . .

### Works Cited

Fowler, H. Ramsey, and Jane E. Aaron. *The Little, Brown Handbook*. 4th ed. Illinois: Scott, Foresman and co., 1989.

Hacker, Diana. *The Bedford Handbook for Writers*. 3rd ed. Boston: Bedford Books, 1991.

**Appendix 2: Student Commentaries**

9/6/00  
HONRS 390-10  
Commentary #2

After class last Wednesday, I felt I had a better grasp on the ideas associated with the Fisher King and the Waste Land. Our discussion helped me comprehend the important ideas presented in the three assigned readings. As I began to read *The Great Gatsby* by Scott Fitzgerald, I felt confident that I could recognize the Fisher King and Waste Land imagery. Now, that I have finished the text, I can identify some of the characteristics associated with the two symbols found in the novel.

When I first began to read the novel, I assumed that Jay Gatsby was the Fisher King. The novel gave several hints to confirm my guess, but it was not until chapter six that I was positive. In this chapter, the narrator attempts to explain Gatsby's origins. He said, "The truth was that Jay Gatsby, of West Egg, Long Island, sprang from his Platonic conception of himself. He was a son of God..." (p. 104). This idea is similar to King Arthur. Like Gatsby, no one was sure where Arthur came from or who his parents were. Gatsby's death also defended the idea that he was the Fisher King. I was amazed to see how the Fisher King symbolism was connected to this story.

The Waste Land imagery was a little harder to recognize. After reading the novel, I concluded that the Waste Land was Gatsby's house. At the beginning of the novel, the house was alive and well kept. The house was in perfect order and it often was filled with people having a good time. The decay of the Waste Land began when Gatsby found Daisy. There were no longer parties and Gatsby sent all his servants away. After Gatsby's death, the narrator commented, "Gatsby's house was still empty when I left- the grass on his lawn had grown as long as mine" (p. 188). The house was no longer

prosperous. These examples provide sufficient support that Gatsby's house was symbolic to the Waste Land.

Although the novel's setting is in the 1920's, the imagery of the Fisher King and the Waste Land is present. It is comparable to the King Arthur legend. I look forward to examining other works and determining if the Fisher King and Waste Land symbolism are present in them like they were in *The Great Gatsby*.

Great Gatsby.

10/11/00  
HONRS 390-10  
Commentary # 6

As I watched the movie *Apocalypse Now*, it was easy to recognize the Fisher King and Waste Land symbolism. The imagery presented in the movie was very similar to Perceval's story, which was presented in the Weston article. In this commentary, I will discuss the symbolism found in *Apocalypse Now* and how it compares to Perceval's quest.

Martin Sheen's character, like Perceval, was the questor. The Captain's mission, or quest, was to assassinate Kurtz because he was mentally unstable. If he healed the sick ruler, he would fulfill his quest and restore the Waste Land. To heal Kurtz, Sheen's character had to kill him. *yes*

The Fisher King was Kurtz (Marlon Brando). Kurtz's health paralleled the health of his village. This idea was presented in a discussion between Sheen's character and Dennis Hopper's character. Hopper said that Kurtz depended on his people and his people relied on him, which is one of the characteristics of the Fisher King. *good*

The village that Kurtz controlled was the Waste Land. Kurtz had mental problems, so the village had mental instability. The village members performed Kurtz's insane orders. They worshipped him as if he was a god. The movie did an excellent job at presenting the Waste Land. The village was dark, eerie, and full of death. The villagers seemed disconnected. *how?*

At the end of the movie, Sheen's character fulfilled his quest by taking Kurtz's life. The healing of Kurtz restored the village. The villagers praised Sheen for *yes, interesting, isn't*



HON 390-10

10-11-00

Commentary on *Apocalypse Now*

The way that *Apocalypse Now* coincided with the idea of the Waste Land almost seemed too simple. The jungle (Kurtz's personal community/cult) seemed to be the wasteland. Kurtz was the Fisher King. This was obvious when Dennis Hopper said, "When he dies it dies, and when it dies he dies." Willard might be a questor, but he is almost questing to destroy the Fisher King and his wasteland, not save it. As for the cinematography of the film, the camera angles and close ups provide a desperate mood.

yes - but remember the possibility of an inversion to the F.K./quester path in 20<sup>th</sup> c. use

The way they overlay Willard's face with the background of the jungle is very effective.

good

There is also a focus on close ups of the eyes. Music was an important element during the movie because of the intense, almost anxious feeling of it. The circus music played in a minor key was excellent in conveying that uneasy feeling. When Kurtz dies and

yes and its spooky also

says, "The horror, the horror," I think he is referring to the wasteland of his life. When

yes and the inability to say anything else about it other than a vague description

Willard tells Kurtz that he sees "no method," it reminds me of a sense of nothingness as

in the wasteland. Overall, it seems that they have all broken away from society and

civilization. It was as if Willard was separated from everyone else because his mission

was clear. The rest of the men were just wandering around, not knowing why they were

there, or where they were going.

Christy -  
Nice job  
being skeptical.  
The pattern does fit  
quite smoothly, but I  
think you're also getting  
at problem places.  
Nice job.

Yeah. I think it's  
important that the  
other men are also on  
the quest, even though  
they don't know  
it.

drinking wine. I am not sure if this is just ~~pertaining~~ pertaining to the time period and culture or if it has something to do with the Waste Land they are mentally part of. The idea of Brett and Jake together is kind of taboo through the whole book. If they seem to love each other as they claim then my question is: why aren't they together? Even at the end of the book she has broken commitment with Michael, but decides to go back to him. Strange!

because of  
Jake's impotence

Christy-  
You've raised  
some good questions  
here - especially regarding  
what sort of Waste Land  
Hemingway creates. Your ideas about  
Brett and Jake are interesting as well.  
You might also want to consider  
whether or not Jake could be the  
Fisher King and Brett the question.

(10)

390-10

9/27/00

Throughout the "Time Passes" section of To the Lighthouse, the idea of the Waste Land is expressed it seems through the descriptions of the empty house and the mention of death. The idea that all of the Ramsays and other people who stayed in the house just kind of deserted it was representative of a downfall of the land. On page 137, a detailed passage of the deserted house and its decay presents this very well. The death of <sup>Mrs.</sup> Mr. Ramsay seems to have thrown a whole blanket of depression upon the house and it seems that revival lies within Lily. The painting that she is working on seems to be capturing the transition of the house since they have last been there. Her sympathy for Mr. Ramsay seems to come too late, and this bugs her because I think she sees him as the *good* main tie she has to the late Mrs. Ramsay. Lily's outbursts and cries out to Mrs. Ramsay express the effect that her death has had on Lily. The scenes of Mr. Ramsay and the kids in the boat going to the Lighthouse seem very representative of the change in their family *how so?* after Mrs. Ramsay has died. Finally at the end, Mr. Ramsay praises James, which brings their relationship to a new understanding.

Lily's painting is finished in the end after all of these years representing a closure *nice* to Mrs. Ramsay's intentions and death. It somewhat brought about the explanation of the true affect she had on her family and the others at the summerhouse. Mr. Ramsay finally made it to the Lighthouse. I think this is symbolic of his personal priorities in life and *how so?* how they changed after Mrs. Ramsay died. Lily seems to play the part of the questing *good* knight who put all of these pieces together. Obviously I am probably missing certain

underlying meanings, but there are so many varying elements that trying to fit them all together is difficult.

yes, it is  
difficult to  
put them all  
together, however you  
seem to be raising  
some interesting questions  
about relationships.

(b)

Gatsby Commentary  
September 6, 2000

I vaguely remember having read The Great Gatsby in high school, but I feel like I'm reading an entirely different book. There are layers beneath the plot that I never noticed before. These new thoughts on the work are mainly due to comparing it to our study of Camelot and the Wasteland. I would agree that this novel relates to the focus of the colloquium.

Some of my conclusions may be overly simplified, and yet there does seem to be certain elements that fit together. Although Daisy's character represents the disillusionment of 1920's society, she also symbolizes Camelot, perfection that cannot last. He even describes loving her as "the following of a grail." Unfortunately, the Daisy whom Gatsby loves has changed by the time he is reunited with her, or maybe he never really knew her at all. She is, as Nick describes, a woman of "vast carelessness." In my opinion, Gatsby is King Arthur. He builds a kingdom and places his faith in a woman, just as Arthur did. He tries to be the savior of a dream that ultimately disintegrates and destroys him in the process.

I found similarity in the moods of The Great Gatsby and the "Wasteland." Throughout the novel, especially during Gatsby's parties, there are such vivid descriptions of the excessive way in which these people lived. Fitzgerald describes this "universe of ineffable gaudiness" down to the details of dress, music, clothing, and atmosphere. Buried in this abundance is a great sense of emptiness, the meaninglessness of it all. This reminded me of T.S. Eliot's poem, a confusing collection of literary and culture references. I think maybe both works depict the excess of the time covering

people's fear of reality, war, and death. "What shall we ever do?" I haven't quite made sense of it yet, but I think I'm getting there.

Film Commentary  
October 10, 2000

Days later, I'm still not sure I know how I feel about "Apocalypse Now." I'm  
*excellent* confused, disturbed, fascinated. Although the movie did not depict a different war than  
the one we have studied, it shows the human experience as it relates to gruesome conflict.  
How do you endure it? How do you go back to what you knew to be true before?

Seeing a Wasteland in this environment is no stretch. Obviously, these men are  
*yes that, possibly  
men who became  
foreign to them  
to they return* lost in a foreign landscape. They are trapped in a wilderness with danger all around  
them. Also, they have lost their way of life, exposure to the culture they understand. But  
it's more than that. They have lost their security, their idealism, the belief they once had  
that the world was good and orderly. They have lost their identity, dream of society, their  
Camelot. As Willard says, "it wasn't just insanity and murder." It was the death of life  
as they knew it. I think that is why he can understand the madness that drives Kurtz.  
That is why could not go home and be with his wife. His concept of the world and life  
has been irreversibly altered. That is why he is capable of shooting the injured girl.  
Exposure to death and destruction has overcome his sense of morality, his value for  
human life.

*yes and that  
seems to be the  
result of war.  
Specifically  
Vietnam*

What bothered me most was not seeing any real completion in the movie. There  
is no sense of ending or resolution. What effect did Colonel Kurtz's death have? What  
happened to Captain Willard after his mission, after the war? Did he ever visit Kurtz's

children? Also, there is so much that I can't quite make sense of. Kurtz said "horror and moral terror are your friend." Where is the truth in that? The only possible Fisher King

character is Kurtz, and that idea is far too bizarre to explain. If Willard is indeed the questor, what is his quest? If it is to conquer his own darkness by destroying the darkness

in Kurtz, he certainly succeeds. And yet there must be some significance to the fact that

he turns off the radio, rather than answer the call for help, in the final scene. Did he

conquer the demon or did the demon conquer him?

well, if you're looking for absolute truth, it's not going to be there

why? yes, I think it's true and there's some

(10)  
Kate -  
You're bringing up all the important & unresolvable issues in the film and you're not giving us so simple resolutions, which is excellent. Coppola felt like a failure for not giving answers to his film. Do you think it is a failure in the film to not provide answers?



Greene Commentary  
October 25, 2000

I must say that liking *The Power and the Glory* has surprised me. There is no love story. There is no noble, likeable hero. Yet, I found myself wanting this corrupt priest to escape danger. Maybe it's because I could understand his weakness, sympathize with his humanity.

- Yes - Greene is  
very adept at  
making the  
case about  
unlikeable  
people

The key elements are present in the work. The physical Wasteland is easily recognizable. From the words, you can feel the unbearable heat and humidity of Mexico. You can understand why the foreigners so desperately want to leave. There is a physical journey and a physical quest. I believe the priest is a questor. I am still trying to make connections, identify a Fisher King, but it's not as clear in this work.

- Why is the  
Wasteland  
questing?

We left a word off of the list describing the Wasteland- fear. The internal Wasteland of the characters is fear. Mr. Tench's fear of writing the letter to his wife, receiving proof that he has been forgotten. The villagers' and Mrs. Fellow's fear of death. The priest's fear of eternal damnation. The characters may be physically stuck in the landscape, but they are really trapped by their fears.

- good

fears are  
compounded by  
the strict  
government  
regulations

I find myself rereading the priest's words: "Pain is part of joy....Never get tired of suffering." Does this suggest that there is some point or benefit to the Wasteland? Or does this simply define the need to find a reason for human pain and suffering? Maybe

or both?

that is the real journey, going from denial to acceptance. When we stop fighting our pain, our fate, we can finally see the beauty in it.

(b)

Yes, but is that enough? Shouldn't we also move beyond the pain? And is this possibly where the whiskey must fail? Or does he succeed? Good addition to the Wask and list - fear.

**Appendix 3: Mid-term Evaluations****Midterm Course Evaluation  
Honors 390**

At this point in the semester, I would like to get some feedback from you on how the class is going, what we're doing that you enjoy, find helpful, intriguing, exciting, interesting, as well as what we're doing that you're not so fond of, that could be improved upon, that should be replaced by another activity, etc.

If you could respond to that general prompt, as well as answer the specific questions below, I would greatly appreciate your comments, and I will be sure to make use of them in teaching the rest of the semester. In order to maintain confidentiality, please type your responses in an email, sent to Dr. Stedman (bstedman@gw.bsu.edu), before next Wednesday (18 October). Dr. Stedman has agreed to keep your names and email addresses confidential. In other words, the only material I will read and have access to is your responses to the general prompt above and the questions below. Thank you for doing this.

1. Some of you came into the course with specific curiosities or expectations. Are those curiosities/expectations being fulfilled/met?
2. What have we done so far that you consider most helpful in understanding the material? (for example: the commentaries, groupwork in class, group presentations, full-class discussion)
3. Do you think the expected work load is fair?
4. Have we done something that you thought "worked" for the class and would like to do more of in the future?
5. What have we done that seemed unhelpful, confusing, uninteresting, etc.? Do you have suggestions for how to improve upon that situation or those situations?

Respondent #1:

I have enjoyed the class so far. I enjoy the variety of books and look forward to seeing the other movies.

I am pretty satisfied with what I am taking from this class. I came in to learn about how myths are used in the literature and movies, and I definitely have learned a lot so far.

The class discussions definitely help me to better understand and more critically react to the literature and movies. I enjoy listening to other students' perspectives. The commentaries allow me to think about symbols in the literature and movies.

Yes, the work load is pretty fair (maybe 1 less book to read would make the work load fairer).

The class discussions are probably the most vital aspect of this course.

Respondent #2:

## General Prompt:

This class has been an enjoyable experience thus far. I appreciate the open discussion format because it gives everyone (students and educators) a chance to expand upon the ideas that others have put forth. To paraphrase Dennis Hopper's character in Apocalypse now: the class has expanded my mind man.

## Specific questions:

1. The only real expectations or curiosities I had coming into the class involved the meaning of the specific themes and symbols the class is focused on. Since I now feel I have a basic understanding of the purpose symbols such as the Fisher King, the class has met all of the expectations I had coming into it (that is not to say that I feel my understanding of these symbols is in any way complete, or that I will not continue to benefit from further study).
2. The commentaries have been very helpful in collecting and organizing my ideas about the works we have read/watched. However, the class discussion has provided me the greatest understanding because it introduces new ideas and angles that I probably would not come up with myself.
3. The only way I have to judge the work load is in comparison with the other colloque I have taken, and my conclusion is that the work loads are roughly equal, so they must both be fairly standard. I have not had any difficulty getting the readings and commentaries done, so I cannot complain.
4. As I noted earlier, the full-class discussions have been the most enlightening feature of the course. I do not really see any way to do more of this in the future though, since we have a fixed number of hours to meet each week.

5. It would be interesting to go more in depth into the authors' experiences and influences that lead them to write each novel we have read. I do not really have a suggestion on how to do this in class, being a lazy college student I sure do not want to have to take the initiative to do it on my own time.

Respondent #3:

Midterm Evaluation

Overall, the class has been very successful. I came into the class not knowing anything about the Fisher King and Waste Land symbols. Now, I have a definite grasp on the topic. I hope that throughout the rest of the semester, my knowledge of the topic will increase more. I really enjoy the different types of media (literature, music, movies) used in the class. The variety in instruction keeps the class interesting and is helpful in the comprehension of the topics discussed. I also like the group presentations about each author. It allows the class to understand the author's work more as well as provide additional background information.

I think the work load is a little rough for a two credit class. The readings are relatively easy and recreational, but it is sometimes difficult to read an entire novel in one week...especially when you are a slow reader like myself. As I looked through the syllabus, the rest of the semester seems to solve that problem. I feel that the commentaries are very appropriate for the class. The commentaries allow me to express my ideas about the assignments and help me organize my thoughts for class discussion.

The only improvement that I can suggest is that I wish that I had had a better grasp of the characteristics of the Fisher King and the Waste Land. I felt kind of lost in the first few weeks because I did not know anything about the imagery discussed in class. This could be solved by having a longer introduction and possibly making a list of characteristics the first week of class.

I just wanted to add a little note and tell you that you are doing an exceptional job this semester. You are definitely a better instructor than many of my other professors. You have good communication skills. Your questions facilitate excellent discussions and really make me think. You should seriously consider pursuing a teaching profession at the collegiate level. You already have a good grasp on it!

Respondent #4:

1. I had heard that we'd be watching some cool movies, but I had no idea that we would have this much reading.
2. The discussions have helped me the most. Sometimes they seem long and boring, but overall they are extremely helpful.

3. The workload isn't necessarily enjoyable, but I suppose that that is why it is called work. It is fair though.
4. The movie night was fun. That would be cool to do more often.
5. The lectures can be uninteresting at times, but I don't think that there is anything you need to change. We just have to plow through it. Since there are so many movies out there that would be awesome for this class, it would be cool to watch more movies.

Respondent #5:

1. So far the course is meeting my expectations and more so. It is the only class I really anticipate this semester. I enjoy the discussion, and respond well to thinking aloud, and have been challenged in my thinking and reasoning skills.
2. Class discussion helps me the most, I enjoy it and am inspired when I hear other people with good ideas and verbal expression of their interpretations.
3. The work load is more than adequate and almost too much for a 2 hour colloque in my opinion. I am alright with the reading, as well as with having to write a commentary, and participate in class as well, but I was surprised after having my conference at the length of the individual projects. I was told 8-10 pages in a paper, which I think is way too much considering the work we are already doing each week in addition to that. I did not expect it and it is too long.
4. I really liked looking at Apocalypse Now, a movie I had been "dying" (HA HA) to see for a while, and comparing it briefly to Heart of Darkness. It might have been cool to add H of D to our reading list so everyone else could have appreciated the comparisons. I like doing this too... comparing visual wastland movies to written works. More of this should be done as well as incorporation of art, music, dance etc.... (but maybe that is for us to explore?)
5. I would have liked the cliff notes to "TO the lighthouse"..... :)

Respondent #6:

1. I came into the class with curiosities as to what in the world this class is all about. And yes, these curiosities were fulfilled from day one when Erin explained the course to me, and everyday I begin to understand more and more exactly what she's getting at with all this Fisher King/Wasteland business.
2. I begin to really understand the material through our group discussions in class. Sometimes, group work is helpful, but I prefer to hear what everyone in the class has to say.

3. I think the expected work load, the readings, are rough at times, when the reading is Elliot or Woolf for example. But others, like the Great Gatsby, are not so difficult to understand, and a pleasure to read. The commentaries are definitely not too much to ask out of me.

4. I really like when Erin can relate a book, or the Fisher King theory with a movie or music. I like to relate literature to other things besides more literature.

5. I can't really think of anything unhelpful or confusing off the top of my head that you are "doing." I think the subject in general is a little fuzzy at times, and trying to find the king, land, and knight can be a stretch sometimes, but its never uninteresting.

no suggestions. this course is quite interesting and i'm glad i'm a part of it. everyone else in the class seems very very intelligent, and I love hearing their thoughts and ideas.

#### Respondent #7:

I first have to admit that I signed up for this particular colloquium as a way to fit a requirement into this semester's schedule, but I have really grown to enjoy. The concepts we are learning about (the Wasteland, the Fisher King, etc.) are really interesting. What I like most is that Erin is not necessarily teaching us anything. She is drawing her conclusions from the material in the same way we are. We're adding to a process rather than just passing or failing a set curriculum. The work load is fair in my estimation. I find the commentaries and class discussion to be most helpful in developing my ideas and understand what I'm supposed to be looking for. I would enjoy watching more films that deal with our subject matter. The visual component adds to the experience in my opinion. My only real suggestion would be to break up the two hours. Discussion for that length of time can get tedious even with a break. Other than that, I am thoroughly enjoying myself.

#### Respondent #8:

I did not come into this class with any expectations, maybe some curiosities. I actually did not know what a waste land image was. Nor had i heard of T.S. Eliot's "The Waste Land." I was just curious as to what it was. Now that I know, it is interesting to apply these ideas to everyday movies and literature. What I consider most helpful in the class is full class discussion because when i don't understand something, I can receive other's views on it and yours as well. I think the work load is fair. The commentaries are a nice way to find out whether or not we have read instead of giving in class quizzes. The fact that I like to read and I don't get to read novels much anymore b/c I have no time also might be a reason why I like the work. I also like the little groups that we get into to brain storm, if you may, because it helps people's ideas come together to make something substantial. One thing that I haven't really found all that helpful is the group presentations. The biographies of the authors are not all that helpful to me in understanding the text. Plus, there has been so much info to pack into the presentations, that it seems like I can't catch much of it. Other than that, my only other concern is the fact that our final presentation and project is worth 40% of our grade. That puts so much pressure on this one assignment.

Besides the fact that it is at the end of the semester along with our other finals. It is just a little overwhelming. But, since it is so open, i think that helps. Overall, it has a been a pretty decent class.

Respondent #9:

1. I don't think I had any expectations of the course. One thing that attracted me to this class was the mention of Pulp Fiction in the description because I'm a fan of the movie. I'm sure that we'll get around to watching it. I'm just getting anxious. I'm also wondering what you (Erin) are going to do with what's going on in class. I know this is for your thesis, so how do you think is this helpful for you?

2. The thing that is most helpful in understanding the material is the class discussion. Sometimes my commentaries are completely absurd and off-the-mark so having class discussion brings me around to the awareness of other ideas.

3. Yes. I think the expected workload is very fair. I don't really have much else to say about that.

4. I thought that watching parts of the Hearts of Darkness documentary was a good supplement to discussing Apocalypse Now (besides the fact that it was interesting.) I think those sorts of things -- material that supplies a reference point or gives a "behind the scenes" kind of feel -- helps us (or at least me) gain a better perspective on what we're reading. And it was great that we could apply the Waste Land imagery to the real lives of the actors while the movie was being made. I hope that makes sense. I know we have a kind of overview of the authors' lives before we go into discussing their respective books, but I'd like to know more about what was going on in their lives when they were writing the particular book they were reading, or anything interesting that critics have said about them.

5. I can't really think of anything that has been unhelpful, confusing, uninteresting and the like. If I do, I'll let you know.

Respondent #10:

I think that the class is going well. I find the parallels that we are drawing between literature and the symbolism of the Wasteland and Fisher King interesting. I was never aware of it before and I took this class hoping to learn about these symbols. I find it interesting that we can find so many images of it in today's society.

1. I really didn't have any specific thing that I wanted to learn about.

2. The commentaries are good for checking understanding and for letting us kind of explore ideas that we discuss in class. Groupwork in class is fine and the group presentations are a little tedious, but it was interesting to do research. Full class discussion is kind of slow but when we do talk it is pretty insightful.



3. I think that the workload is pretty fair.
4. The group work was kind of neat especially when we would look at one specific character in the book.
5. I don't really see anything that was unhelpful. I think that the class is based on discussion and it is a little slow at times, but it works.

Respondent #11:

1. I don't remember what kinds of expectations I had when I started this course, so I can't say whether or not they are being met. I don't even remember why I signed up for this course in particular. I think it fit my schedule best.
2. The most helpful thing so far has been small group discussions. They give everyone an opportunity to talk and listen to others ideas, not just the same few people every week.
3. Yes, the expected workload is fair. It's only once a week.
4. I can't think of anything right now.
5. Some of the reading is a little confusing, but talking in class helps a lot.

Overall, the class is going well, I think...for now.

Respondent #12:

- 1) My curiosity upon entering this course was to try and figure out exactly what the Holy Grail and other symbols were, as in basic definitions, and then have revealed to me the places where I could find them throughout the literature and film mentioned within the course description. So far, the symbols have been clearly defined, but the placement of them throughout literature and film has been a little shaky. I've seen a few examples, but I'm not quite convinced that these symbols show up enough throughout recent history that they deserve this much attention. I believe they show up, but I haven't been shown adequate proof as of yet. Back to the original question: my expectation of learning more about the symbols has been fulfilled, but my expectation of proof has not.
- 2) I enjoy studying the material on an individual basis and then discussing the material in smaller groups of three or four. Not only was it more enjoyable, but I think a lot more productive ideas came out of our small group meetings. Discussing material as a class can prove interesting, but more often than not it is just pulling teeth. In fact, I sometimes think the large group discussions can be counterproductive, especially when there isn't a focus on what is being discussed. The large group discussions often lead to people taking tangents and spouting random

information. Sometimes interesting, but not always constructive. A small group with a set task will accomplish more.

3) I have a hard time finding time in my weekly schedule to read an entire book. I don't think it is entirely unfair to ask us to read roughly a book a week, but I struggle to find time to do so. Especially tiresome is reading the book with the thorough detail needed to participate in class discussion. Reading a book is one thing, but reading for the sake of discussion, debate, and scholarly work is another endeavor. Is the work load unfair? No. Does that mean that I get it done easily each week? No.

4) I especially enjoyed the small group work that we've done once before. I found the time we spent in those small groups to be much more productive than time in whole class discussion, and I learned a lot more from those few people in that small amount of time than I have learned from a whole class period of class discussion. Now, class discussion certainly has its benefits and should not be abandoned, but perhaps a nice medium would be to meet as a small group and then report back to the class. Any way that it is done, I enjoyed the work in small groups.

5) Most all of the contributions to class have helped in some way or another. Unfortunately, as happens in most classes at one point or another, the discussion can lead astray. Someone hits upon a topic that needs to be discussed and then when questioned further just strays from the intended point. I'm as guilty as anyone of doing just this. Perhaps some more guided questioning could help to avoid this problem. Aside from this, though, most everything helps comprehension in some way.

Fall 2000 Course Evaluation Report

First Name: Barbara  
 Last Name : Stedman  
 Department: HONRS  
 Course : 390  
 Section : 010

QUESTIONS	Responses					Total	Median	Mean	Stdv
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)				
This evaluation was administered according with the above procedures. 1=Yes 2=No	10	0				10			
1. I would rate the instructor's explanation of course content as:	0	0	1	2	8	11	4.81	4.64	.67
2. I would rate the instructor's concern about my progress in the course as:	0	0	1	3	7	11	4.71	4.55	.69
3. I would rate the instructor's organization of the course material as:	0	0	1	5	6	12	4.50	4.42	.67
4. Compared to other instructors I have had at Ball State University, I would rate this instructor as:	0	0	1	6	5	12	4.33	4.33	.65
5. The instructor was enthusiastic and interested in the subject.	0	1	0	1	10	12	4.90	4.67	.89
6. The instructor stimulated my interest in and appreciation of the subject.	1	0	2	3	6	12	4.50	4.08	1.24
7. The instructor presented criteria for grading in a clear manner.	0	0	1	4	7	12	4.64	4.50	.67
8. Grading seemed fair.	0	0	0	4	8	12	4.75	4.67	.49
9. If I had the opportunity to do so, I would take another course from this instructor.	0	0	2	3	7	12	4.64	4.42	.79
10. Compared with other Honors instructors I have had, this instructor was	3	4	3	2	0	12	2.25	2.33	1.07
11. Compared with other courses I have taken, this course was	4	2	4	2	0	12	2.50	2.33	1.15
12. Compared with other Honors courses I have taken, this course was	2	6	1	3	0	12	2.17	2.42	1.08

This summary is based on 12 student rating forms.

- Responses:
- |                            |                         |                    |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. (1) Very Confusing      | (5) Very Clear          |                    |
| 2. (1) Very Unconcerned    | (5) Genuinely Concerned |                    |
| 3. (1) Very Disorganized   | (5) Highly Organized    |                    |
| 4. (1) Much Worse          | (5) Much Better         |                    |
| 5-9. (1) Strongly Disagree | (3) Neutral             | (5) Strongly Agree |
| 10-12. (1) Much Better     | (3) Neutral             | (5) Much Worse     |

Appendix 4: Final Evaluations

DO NOT WRITE IN THIS AREA

## Honors College Course and Instructor Evaluation

Course

H 390

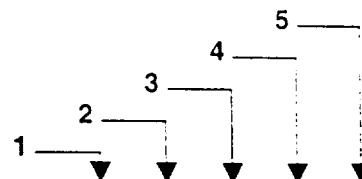
Section Number

10

Instructor

EPA McMullen

Please bubble in the number on the scale that best describes your judgement of that characteristic.  
Please use only a #2 Pencil.



The instructor is to be absent from the room, and this instrument is to be administered in a professional manner by someone other than the instructor;

Instructors and/or students are not in any way to attempt to influence the outcome of this evaluation;

This evaluation was administered in accordance with these procedures (1) Yes (2) No; --->

If there were any violations of the procedures outlined above in the administration of this evaluation, please note the nature of the violation(s) on the back of this form.

1. I would rate the instructor's explanation of course content as: ----->

(1) Very Confusing (5) Very Clear

2. I would rate the instructor's concern about my progress in the course as: ----->

(1) Very Unconcerned (5) Genuinely Concerned

3. I would rate the instructor's organization of the course material as: ----->

(1) Very Disorganized (5) Highly Organized

4. Compared to other instructors I have had at Ball State University, I would rate this

instructor as: (1) Much Worse (5) Much Better ----->

For questions #5-9 (1) Strongly Disagree (3) Neutral (5) Strongly Agree

5. The instructor was enthusiastic and interested in the subject.

6. The instructor stimulated my interest in and appreciation of the subject.

7. The instructor presented criteria for grading in a clear manner.

8. Grading seemed fair.

9. If I had the opportunity to do so, I would take another course from this instructor.

For questions #10-12 (1) Much Better (3) Neutral (5) Much Worse

10. Compared with other Honors instructors I have had, this instructor was

11. Compared with other courses I have taken, this course was

12. Compared with other Honors courses I have taken, this course was

Please respond to the following questions in the space below or on the back side of this form.

1. What do you consider to be the strong and weak points of this course?

Strong - discussions

2. What do you consider to be the instructor's strong and weak points?

Strong - so freakin' smart - makes class interesting

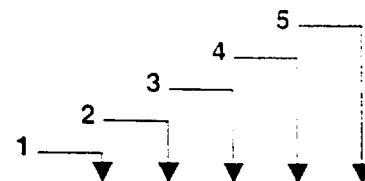
3. What changes would you recommend to improve the course?

DO NOT WRITE IN THIS AREA

## Honors College Course and Instructor Evaluation

Course HNRS 390Section Number 10Instructor Erin McMullen

Please bubble in the number on the scale that best describes your judgement of that characteristic.  
Please use only a #2 Pencil.



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This evaluation was administered in accordance with these procedures (1) Yes (2) No; --->  
If there were any violations of the procedures outlined above in the administration of this evaluation, please note the nature of the violation(s) on the back of this form.

1. I would rate the instructor's explanation of course content as: ----->  
(1) Very Confusing (5) Very Clear

2. I would rate the instructor's concern about my progress in the course as: ----->  
(1) Very Unconcerned (5) Genuinely Concerned

3. I would rate the instructor's organization of the course material as: ----->  
(1) Very Disorganized (5) Highly Organized

4. Compared to other instructors I have had at Ball State University, I would rate this instructor as: (1) Much Worse (5) Much Better ----->

For questions #5-9 (1) Strongly Disagree (3) Neutral (5) Strongly Agree

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6. The instructor stimulated my interest in and appreciation of the subject.

7. The instructor presented criteria for grading in a clear manner.

8. Grading seemed fair.

9. If I had the opportunity to do so, I would take another course from this instructor.

For questions #10-12 (1) Much Better (3) Neutral (5) Much Worse

10. Compared with other Honors instructors I have had, this instructor was

11. Compared with other courses I have taken, this course was

12. Compared with other Honors courses I have taken, this course was

Please respond to the following questions in the space below or on the back side of this form.

1. What do you consider to be the strong and weak points of this course?

The final project was a good way to let us explore different wastelands. The books discussions were a bit weak

2. What do you consider to be the instructor's strong and weak points?

Erin was open to all our ideas. Yeah!!

3. What changes would you recommend to improve the course? None

DO NOT WRITE IN THIS AREA

## Honors College Course and Instructor Evaluation

Course HONORS 390 Section Number 10 Instructor Erin McMullen

Please bubble in the number on the scale that best describes your judgement of that characteristic.  
Please use only a #2 Pencil.

5 —  
4 —  
3 —  
2 —  
1 —

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2. I would rate the instructor's concern about my progress in the course as: --->  
(1) Very Unconcerned (5) Genuinely Concerned

3. I would rate the instructor's organization of the course material as: --->  
(1) Very Disorganized (5) Highly Organized

4. Compared to other instructors I have had at Ball State University, I would rate this instructor as: (1) Much Worse (5) Much Better --->

For questions #5-9 (1) Strongly Disagree (3) Neutral (5) Strongly Agree

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8. Grading seemed fair.

9. If I had the opportunity to do so, I would take another course from this instructor.

For questions #10-12 (1) Much Better (3) Neutral (5) Much Worse

10. Compared with other Honors instructors I have had, this instructor was

11. Compared with other courses I have taken, this course was

12. Compared with other Honors courses I have taken, this course was

Please respond to the following questions in the space below or on the back side of this form.

1. What do you consider to be the strong and weak points of this course?

2. What do you consider to be the instructor's strong and weak points?

3. What changes would you recommend to improve the course?

DO NOT WRITE IN THIS AREA

## Honors College Course and Instructor Evaluation

Course Honors 390 Section Number 10 Instructor Erin McMullen

Please bubble in the number on the scale that best describes your judgement of that characteristic.  
Please use only a #2 Pencil.

5  
4  
3  
2  
1

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This evaluation was administered in accordance with these procedures (1) Yes (2) No; --->  
If there were any violations of the procedures outlined above in the administration of this evaluation, please note the nature of the violation(s) on the back of this form.

1. I would rate the instructor's explanation of course content as: ----->  
(1) Very Confusing (5) Very Clear

2. I would rate the instructor's concern about my progress in the course as: ----->  
(1) Very Unconcerned (5) Genuinely Concerned

3. I would rate the instructor's organization of the course material as: ----->  
(1) Very Disorganized (5) Highly Organized

4. Compared to other instructors I have had at Ball State University, I would rate this instructor as: (1) Much Worse (5) Much Better ----->

For questions #5-9 (1) Strongly Disagree (3) Neutral (5) Strongly Agree

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For questions #10-12 (1) Much Better (3) Neutral (5) Much Worse

10. Compared with other Honors instructors I have had, this instructor was

11. Compared with other courses I have taken, this course was

12. Compared with other Honors courses I have taken, this course was

Please respond to the following questions in the space below or on the back side of this form.

1. What do you consider to be the strong and weak points of this course?

2. What do you consider to be the instructor's strong and weak points?

3. What changes would you recommend to improve the course?

Course Honors 390 Section Number 10 Instructor McMullen

1 —  
2 —  
3 —  
4 —  
5 —

▼ ▼ ▼ ▼ ▼

- [illegible]

**Please respond to the following questions in the space below or on the back side of this form**

- [illegible]

Strong: she had a lot of background knowledge  
Weak: lack of enthusiasm and class organization

2. What do you consider to be the instructor's strong and weak points?

Same

3. What changes would you recommend to improve the course? more coordination of class time



DO NOT WRITE IN THIS AREA

## Honors College Course and Instructor Evaluation

Course HONORS 390Section Number 10Instructor McMullen

Please bubble in the number on the scale that best describes your judgement of that characteristic.  
Please use only a #2 Pencil.

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(1) Very Confusing (5) Very Clear

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3. I would rate the instructor's organization of the course material as: ----->  
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For questions #5-9 (1) Strongly Disagree (3) Neutral (5) Strongly Agree

5. The instructor was enthusiastic and interested in the subject.

6. The instructor stimulated my interest in and appreciation of the subject.

7. The instructor presented criteria for grading in a clear manner.

8. Grading seemed fair.

9. If I had the opportunity to do so, I would take another course from this instructor.

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12. Compared with other Honors courses I have taken, this course was

Please respond to the following questions in the space below or on the back side of this form.

1. What do you consider to be the strong and weak points of this course?

*Strong - Class Discussions*

2. What do you consider to be the instructor's strong and weak points?

*Strong - Knowledge and interest in subject*

*No weak points*

3. What changes would you recommend to improve the course?

DO NOT WRITE IN THIS AREA

## Honors College Course and Instructor Evaluation

Course 390 Section Number 10 Instructor Eric McMullen

Please bubble in the number on the scale that best describes your judgement of that characteristic.  
Please use only a #2 Pencil.

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2. What do you consider to be the instructor's strong and weak points?

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Kept my interest

2. What do you consider to be the instructor's strong and weak points?

- Kept my interest  
- Creative  
- Helpful

3. What changes would you recommend to improve the course?

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Course HON 390 Section Number Sec 10 Instructor Erin McMullen

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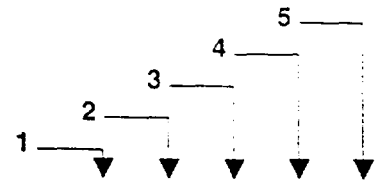
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## Honors College Course and Instructor Evaluation

Course 390 Section Number 10 Instructor McMullen

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3. What changes would you recommend to improve the course?

more media; look at other aspects of wasteland in society

DO NOT WRITE IN THIS AREA

## Honors College Course and Instructor Evaluation

Course HONORS 390 Section Number \_\_\_\_\_ Instructor ERIN McMULLEN

Please bubble in the number on the scale that best describes your judgement of that characteristic.  
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4  
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1. What do you consider to be the strong and weak points of this course?

2. What do you consider to be the instructor's strong and weak points?

*STRAVE: You did a great job in getting us to see Fisher Kings & Waste Lands. It definitely sparked my interest.*

3. What changes would you recommend to improve the course?

Course 390 Section Number 10 Instructor McMullen

3. What changes would you recommend to improve the course?

## Appendix 5: Writings on my Research

### A Champagne Waste Land

In November 1931, F. Scott Fitzgerald published an article titled, "Echoes of the Jazz Age," in which he gave several descriptions of American society in the 1920s. Among these, he called the twenties "an age of miracles, . . . art, . . . [and] excess" in which the American people were "a whole race going hedonistic, deciding on pleasure" (14-15). Fitzgerald's society driven by excess, as portrayed in The Great Gatsby, is an example of the twentieth century Waste Land, a self-destructive society that leaves the land and itself in ruins. Though Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby was published and set in this wild decade, two of the characters in particular, Nick Carraway and Jay Gatsby, resist submitting to pleasure for pleasure's sake and, in effect, attempt to resist inclusion into the Waste Land. Nick attends Gatsby's parties and socializes with the elite of both East and West Egg, but he leaves the East coast at the end of the summer. Gatsby, though the center of controversy and speculation, appears above or outside his parties, rarely mingling with his guests. However, Nick and Gatsby become involved in the land laid to waste--Nick as a knight figure who is questing to save Gatsby, the Fisher King figure whose health is ironically connected to the society above which he seems to hover.

Fitzgerald creates two waste lands in Gatsby: the opulent lifestyle of East and West Egg's inhabitants is a physical waste land; the careless attitude shared by these people is a mental waste land. According to Jessie Weston's From Ritual to Romance, the Waste Land is a desolate, barren, and infertile terrain, left in that condition by drought or the ravages of war (17). Fitzgerald presents a Waste Land that is an ironic inversion of the original, which exists most prominently in the Valley of Ashes, a part of Fitzgerald's landscape that has been victimized by industrialization. From superficial observation, the characteristics of the Valley of Ashes are similar to those of the traditional Waste Land, but upon closer examination it becomes clear that the symbol is inverted. Nick gives the Valley a perversely fertile quality when he tells the reader that it is "a fantastic farm where ashes grow like wheat into ridges and hills and grotesque gardens. . . ." (Fitzgerald 27).



However, Fitzgerald's waste land also goes beyond these readily observable signs of decay mixed with perverse growth.

East and West Egg and New York City are urban waste lands, a twentieth century modernization of the ancient symbol. The landscape is choked by ostentatious mansions, buildings and traffic. What is significant about these settings is their foundation in greed and corruption, evidenced by the behavior of the characters in *Gatsby*. An obvious example of these amoral characters is Meyer Wolfsheim, the gangster who fixed the 1919 World Series; a more subtle example is Jordan Baker's sportsmanship--as Nick says, "she was incurably dishonest" (Fitzgerald 63). Corresponding to the corrupt fertility of the Valley of Ashes is the overripe quality of the other settings, a quality which implies that East and West Egg and New York City, due to overwhelming wealth, are rotting. Jordan refers to this quality of the land when she, the Buchanans, Nick, and Gatsby are on their way to the city. In reference to New York on summer afternoons, she muses, "There's something very sensuous about it--overripe, as if all sorts of funny fruits were going to fall in your hands" (132). Jordan's exotic image of New York City is perversely fertile, and she, like the others, is attracted to it. The false ripeness or rotten quality of the physical waste land mirrors the mental waste land that exists in each character's mind.

The definitive moments when the physical waste land directly corresponds to its mental counterpart occur at the parties--one at Tom and Myrtle's apartment and two at Gatsby's house. Each event, though superficially beautiful, ends in a violent act--the final eruption of a constant, underlying tension, created by the party-goers who spread rumors, further misunderstandings, and engage in excessive flattery. The majority of this rich society's actions are careless and spontaneous, which illustrates a lack of attention and care given to communication and interaction. In this setting, understanding others and being understood are no longer important, but this attitude has adverse consequences. Due to their careless actions, the East and West Egg societies find themselves in situations that degenerate into oftentimes spontaneous acts of violence. The suddenness of these acts compounds the feeling of carelessness and recklessness associated with the society. The violence itself is a symbol of waste; because the acts were not

mediated (except for Gatsby's murder), they are more profoundly wasteful, as they do not have a definite source. This bewildering violence and the tension that creates it are manifestations of the mental waste land. The violence, through its carelessness and spontaneity, illustrates the lack of attention paid to the surroundings; the tension created by the party-goers through misunderstandings and falseness illustrate the profound isolation of each character--though they appear to mingle and connect, it is only on a superficial and inebriated level. Nick notices this dance-like behavior at Tom's and Myrtle's party as he describes the guests through fluid movements, "People disappeared, reappeared, made plans to go somewhere, and then lost each other, searched for each other, found each other a few feet away" (Fitzgerald 41).

Concealing the flattery, rumors, and chaos is a superficial guise of extravagant beauty, but this beauty is not a blossoming that comes from a fertile land; instead, it is rooted in a mental waste land of corruption and deceit that is nurtured with careless violence. Before Nick attends a party at his neighbor's mansion, he observes the guests' careless behavior, which is similar to that of the guests at Tom's and Myrtle's party. On Gatsby's lawn, there were "men and girls [who] came and went like moths among the whisperings and the champagne and the stars" (43). Just as moths are attracted to the light which will invariably kill them, the guests flit to Gatsby's parties, unable to stay away from what can only harm them. Though the parties do not appear to be dangerous, flowing alcohol and flying music result in careless violence that is bewildering to those involved, as well as those who observe. In the example of the car accident in which neither the driver nor the passenger is aware of the cause of the damage done to their vehicle, Nick describes the scene after the act has taken place, focusing on the results of the accident and calling it a "bizarre and tumultuous scene," founded in "violent confusion" (58). But the confusion and violence are not only physical. From the party vignettes that Fitzgerald includes, it is clear that each person is consumed with his/her surroundings. For example, Owl Eyes, who is amazed that the books in Gatsby's library are real, cannot think beyond his situation at that moment. By being unaware of everything else that occurs around him, he ignores his surroundings and is unable to connect to Nick and Jordan as they pass through the library. The result of being consumed with

the surroundings and being unable to relate to other people is a solitary and vacuous mental waste land. These careless and undirected people are the “foul dust” that preyed on Gatsby, according to Nick’s reflections.

The waste land image presented at the end of Gatsby’s second party connects the state of the land to Gatsby, which is similar to the way the Fisher King is directly connected to the Waste Land in From Ritual to Romance. The state of the land does not simply refer to the physical condition of East and West Egg; rather, it refers to the social landscape that projects itself onto the land. After the Buchanans leave, Nick waits for Gatsby in the garden. When the latter arrives, he is not his usual, glowing and relaxed self, but neither are his surroundings. Nick describes him walking “up and down a desolate path of fruit rinds and discarded favors and crushed flowers” (Fitzgerald 116). The garden, which is normally so carefully managed, now appears to be carelessly destroyed by the party; Gatsby is similarly affected. According to Jessie Weston’s From Ritual to Romance, the Fisher King of ancient ritual and myth has a comparable connection to the land. In her synthesis of the symbol as it appears in ancient vegetation cults, Christianity, and non-Western religions, the Fisher King is defined as, “a being semi-divine, semi-human, standing between his people and land, and the unseen forces which control their destiny” (Weston 129). Though Gatsby does represent the Fisher King through the connection of his physical state to that of the land, he is unconcerned with his position among his guests who are, symbolically, the members of his kingdom.

Through Gatsby’s five-year quest to be reunited with Daisy, he inadvertently becomes the famous and mysterious host of memorable parties on West Egg. Because he personifies everything his guests celebrate, he becomes their Fisher King, inextricably linked to the people’s attitudes and the state of the land. Though Daisy is his goal, she is also a member of the social landscape; it is her wealth and social stature that inspire the discarding of Jay Gatz and creation of Jay Gatsby. Mystery surrounding Gatsby is essential to his survival because it allows him to be ephemeral, illusory, and even semi-divine, but once he reunites with Daisy, changes in his physiognomy are apparent. Gatsby’s grail is Daisy, but his downfall from an already precarious

position comes when he reaches his grail, thereby forcing the illusion of Daisy to become incarnate. The metamorphosis of his dream into reality is paralleled by a necessary incarnation of himself. But Gatsby has stretched his arm too far toward the green light, and both he and Daisy are adversely affected by what should not have happened, namely, their unification and a repitition of the past. On the day of their meeting at Nick's, he is "pale as death" (Fitzgerald 91), and while showing Daisy his house, Nick remarks that "he was running down like an overwound clock" (97). It is his relationship with Daisy that ultimately leads to his death, but Nick also asserts in the first chapter, that his end was affected by more than his golden girl; he argues that something "preyed on Gatsby," and he calls it a "foul dust [that] floated in the wake of his dreams" (6). Critic K.G. Probert argues that "Gatsby himself creates dust, that dreams create dust. . ." (200). Thus, the foul dust can be interpreted as a symbol for society, which leads to the conclusion that Gatsby, who creates the dust, has actually created the force which will destroy him. Gatsby as the Fisher King deteriorates as he becomes incarnate, and this breakdown is paralleled in the society that identifies itself with him.

The Fisher King, in his failing (or failed, in some versions) state can be restored to life, and the land can become fertile once again, but both outcomes depend upon the knight whose quest it is to save them. In traditional myth and ritual as identified by Jessie Weston, the goal of the quest is to find a cure for the Fisher King, the monarch whose personal health is connected to that of the land. Nick is the Knight who most resembles Gawain as he is identified by Weston, in that he is unaware of the reason for his quest, but is able to successfully cure the king and restore the land as described in Weston's explanation: "for so soon as Sir Gawain asked of the Lance. . . the waters flowed again thro' their channel, and all the woods were turned to verdure" (12). Nick's quest is more complicated than the original, as his is divided into two parts, the first being his experience during the summer he knows Gatsby, the second being the narration of that summer. From his retrospective position, Nick has the opportunity to examine the relationship between Gatsby and society, namely how society is simultaneously feeding off of Gatsby's image and magnifying all that Gatsby has created for himself. As Nick associates him with light imagery, and

states that he created himself, Gatsby's existence in society is transient and fragile. His pink suit on the night of Myrtle's murder is luminous (Fitzgerald 150), and his "Platonic conception of himself" (104) is "broken up like glass" (155) on the aforementioned night.

Nick's quest is to restore Gatsby to his ephemeral, transient, other-worldly self, erasing the image of him as the bleeding man, floating in the pool, or in the coffin attended by no one but Nick and Gatsby's forgotten father. In the first part of his quest, Nick is unaware of the importance of his role in Gatsby's life. He is as enchanted as the others by Gatsby, but begins to see beyond this mysterious figure upon learning about his past. For example, he restrains from laughing at Gatsby's "threadbare" stories of his war honors (70), and later on, when he remembers Gatsby's retelling of his self-creation, Nick thinks it is strange or fantastic. Though Nick is no longer swept up in the mystery of Gatsby, he is not aware that it is his role as Knight to save the Fisher King. With the famous line, "Gatsby believed in the green light," Nick becomes aware of the nature of his quest, and in that moment, Gatsby is healed--much like the Gawain version of the Medieval Romances. It is at this ending that Nick realizes that Gatsby's life is meant to be ephemeral, floating above the reality of Jay Gatsby, as well as that of West Egg. By affirming this for himself, Nick succeeds in returning Gatsby to his original state, but he only achieves this on a personal level. Herein lies the main difference between the Medieval Knight's quest and Nick's--the former's is completed for the betterment of society, whereas the latter's is a personal journey that only affects the Knight.

Because the Knight's results can only affect himself, the outcome of the quest is not consistent for all the characters. Gatsby lives on as a way of life for some; for others such as Nick, his death gives opportunity for a complete departure from the waste land, resulting in a personal regeneration. Just as the Waste Land is perversely fertile, regeneration, or "freeing of the waters" as Weston identifies it, is inverted. Ironically those who continue to support the king, in this case, those who carry on with the life that Gatsby symbolized, are not those who experience a regeneration; they are the ones who blindly continue in their mental and physical waste lands. In Gatsby, the society on the East coast will continue to live in the Waste Land, whether conscious

of it or not, if they continue to govern their actions and thoughts by that which is temporary and illusory, in effect creating dreams from dust. The East and West Egg societies continue to do just this, but Nick is able to escape.

The first example of his impending success occurs after Gatsby's funeral, when Nick is walking down to the shore beyond Gatsby's house. In the failing light, "the inessential houses began to melt away until gradually [he] became aware of the old island here that flowered once. . ." (Fitzgerald 189). Nick has made a connection with something lasting and eternal, the land, and has discarded the unimportant and temporary houses. As the questing Knight who understands the temporary nature of Gatsby, Nick is able to escape the physical waste land of the East and return to the Mid-West, a more fertile area of the country. (Note that he wants to talk about crops with Daisy when he first joins her for dinner.) Mentally, he is regenerated, but only at the conclusion of his quest, which coincides with the end of his narrative. He can offer a glimmer of hope to the readers and himself--that we can continue to reach for the eternal--but he must couple it with the knowledge of the human inability to achieve this goal.

Weston's use of the phrase "*Le Roi est mort, Vive le Roi*" takes on new meaning in the twentieth century setting. The quest to ensure the continuance of the king's survival, even if it involves survival beyond the king's death, is only temporary, unconnected with the past, and most important, is fragmentary. Spiritual regeneration may come to Nick, but he is also isolated by this success because the East and West Egg inhabitants continue to live in the Waste Land. The fragmentary nature of the quest's resolution --that one is healed, and the others are not--in conjunction with the inverted versions of the Waste Land symbol and "freeing of the waters" motif illustrate the twentieth century breakdown of tradition. The chronology of *Gatsby* is also an example of this profound change. As the plot moves from a land laid to waste to a partial "freeing of the waters," the seasons change from summer to autumn. What is interesting is that the ancient rites upon which Weston constructs the patterns found in Medieval Romances occurred in the reverse seasonal order. The land was barren in the winter, and brought back to life in the spring. Again, Fitzgerald has taken an ancient symbol and inverted it. By using such familiar images and

patterns, Fitzgerald points out the profound change that has occurred in society since those ancient times by reversing the chronology of the quest, or attributing perverse connotations to symbols, an ironic manipulation that encourages the reader to connect to familiar patterns and meanings, while simultaneously becoming isolated from them.

### The Interior Waste Land of Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*

In *To the Lighthouse*, Virginia Woolf creates a physical waste land when the Ramseys' summer house in the Hebrides decays and nearly collapses in "Time Passes." However, Woolf also presents a mental waste land throughout the novel, which illustrates her preoccupation with the human landscape and how her characters attempt and fail to interact in it. Each character is isolated in a sphere of his or her thoughts and perspectives; Woolf calls attention to the dialogue that does not occur between characters, highlighting their thoughts instead of what they actually say to each other, which renders the characters isolated and misunderstood. As Mrs. Ramsey reflects, "[O]ur apparitions, the things you know us by, are simply childish. Beneath it is all dark, it is all spreading, it is unfathomably deep; but now and again we rise to the surface and that is what you see us by" (Woolf 62). In Woolf's Hebrides each person becomes increasingly isolated and unable to break out of the monotony of such isolation throughout "The Window."

Mrs. Ramsey sees the irreparable damage caused by constant misunderstanding, which connects her to the waste land as a Fisher King. She realizes that each of her family members and guests is entirely foreign to the rest, and her attempts at communicating with all of them shows her desire to overcome the mental waste land in which they reside. During "The Window," Mrs. Ramsey's commanding presence strongly affects her guests and family. She is described as "formidable to behold" (6), and is viewed as a creator of sorts: "flashing her needles, confident, upright, she created drawing-room and kitchen, set them all aglow" (37). Her ability to protect, create, and even rescue her husband from his barren world directly illustrates her connection to the health of the mental landscape. Not only is Mrs. Ramsey a source of comfort, she is represented as a primal life-giver. Thus, Mrs. Ramsey attempts to regenerate Woolf's waste land of isolated characters.

Like a Fisher King who deteriorates with the land, Mrs. Ramsay declines when communication fails to move beyond the tenuous and fleeting kind presented in "The Window." In spite of her commanding presence and "the torch of her beauty" (41), she is aging; she thinks, "Shabby and worn out, and not presumably (her cheeks were hollow, her hair was white) any



longer a sight that filled the eyes with joy” (Woolf 42). In addition to her physical deterioration, Mrs. Ramsey mentally juxtaposes a safe and optimistic moment (in which she decides Lily will marry William Bankes), with the knowledge that such moments are fleeting: “Everything seemed possible. Everything seemed right. Just now (but this cannot last, she thought)” (104). A Questing Knight has yet to enter the narrative and resolve to restore the Fisher King and waste land to a state of health. Lily assumes this role in the final section of the novel, “The Lighthouse.”

Lily’s painting in “The Lighthouse” symbolizes a completion of journeying to the lighthouse and, on a human level, a connection with another person where isolation dominated before. While finishing the painting, Lily realizes that Mrs. Ramsay’s death has dealt a potentially irrevocable blow to the Ramsay family and that it is her role, symbolically through her painting, to restore some semblance of communication to the disconnected human landscape. Accepting her role, Lily feels the need to rejoin the Ramsays and, by extension, heal the mental waste land that pervades the novel. She resolves to “put them together, . . . write them out in some sentence, [and] then she would have got at the truth of things” (147). Lily acts as a Questing Knight who has already failed to restore the Fisher King to health and so will attempt to restore the waste land to health.

In order to complete her vision, Lily draws a line down the middle of the canvas as Cam, James, and Mr. Ramsey reach the lighthouse. Lily’s line connects the planes that were separate, representing a bridge of communication between each isolated person. However, the line also forever separates the planes, which represents the inability to completely understand or communicate with another. Lily succeed in her quest by symbolically opening up the opportunity for community in response to the destructive isolation that previously kept each character apart from the others. However, Lily’s act of healing may or may not affect the other characters in the novel. This open ending illustrates a Modernist manipulation of the Fisher King and Waste Land images.

### Dangerously Separate Spheres in Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited*

In Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited* Charles Ryder and the Marchmain family interact for decades without really communicating with each other. While the characters remain isolated in these separate spheres, England deteriorates from the effects of WWII. Thus, like *To the Lighthouse*, Waugh's novel presents a mental waste land (isolated humans) and a physical waste land (the deterioration of England). However, while Waugh's novel has a waste Land, Fisher King and Questing Knight, his narrative works against traditional patterns that Weston describes in *From Ritual to Romance*. In *Brideshead Revisited*, the Knight does not quest to cure the Fisher King, and the Waste Land continues indefinitely. Waugh invokes these images and frustrates their expected outcome to illustrate the devastating effects of war on the modern world.

In the beginning of the novel Charles is surrounded by an England in ruins during WWII and in a period of prolonged stasis. There is no one to tend to agriculture; soldiers damage and don't bother to repair their temporary quarters; the old homes, which provided Charles with practice in perfecting his artistic style, are uncared for. The present, to Charles, is barren: "[. . .] year by year, generation after generation, they enriched and extended it; year by year the great harvest of timber in the park grew to ripeness; until, in sudden frost, came the age of Hooper; the place was desolate and the work all brought to nothing[. . .]" (351). The age of Hooper is the current and future age, the time of the waste land, impenetrable and unending.

The mental waste land in *Brideshead* is represented by the image of England's waning aristocracy living in separate spheres. Charles enters this world and experiences the prolonged isolation that comes with it. People may glide by him, and he may feel he communicates with them, but a barrier will always exist, and it is a barrier that the people among whom Charles lives do not care to overcome. He describes the way English people live in separate spheres in language that connotes the physical impossibility of communication: "[. . .]we could live in the same street in London, [. . .] could have a liking one for the other, [. . .] yet be restrained from

the past and explores the human effects of the extreme changes the twentieth century has undergone.

However, Waugh does offer some hope of resolution at the end of the epilogue when Charles enters the building that used to be the chapel. In Weston's study, the Knight was sometimes known to approach a Perilous Chapel in despair, enter, encounter inspiring images that renew his sense of purpose in his quest, and leave to find that success in his quest is imminent and that foul weather has cleared. Similarly, Charles enters the chapel and is affected so greatly that he falls to his knees; he discerns hope, calling it "a small red flame [ . . .that] could not have been lit but for the builders and the tragedians, and there I found it this morning, burning anew among the old stones" (Waugh 351). In a moment of desperation, Charles sees a thread of connection from past to present to future, ensuring the survival of himself and England as a whole. Though Waugh does not allow for a Questing Knight to successfully cure the Fisher King and Waste Land in his narrative, he offers a brief glimpse at the possibility of it in this ending.

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